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Ministers Discuss Justice Issues during Visit to Labrador's North Coast

In the spirit of co-operation and building on the established relationship between the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador and the Nunatsiavut Government, the Honourable Jerome Kennedy, Minister of Justice and Attorney General, and the Honourable Patty Pottle, Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, visited the north coast of Labrador last week to meet with representatives of the Nunatsiavut Government. Both ministers also visited schools and met with community groups.

"Our discussions with representatives of Nunatsiavut Government were productive and we have agreed to meet again on the north coast in the near future to discuss justice-related issues," said Minister Kennedy. "It is very valuable to see first-hand the communities and meet face-to-face with residents and community leaders. The north coast has unique challenges and it was critical for us to visit the region to better understand those challenges."

While in Nain, Ministers Kennedy and Pottle met with Acting President of Nunatsiavut Tony Andersen, Ministers William Barbour, Darryl Shiwak and Ben Ponniuk. All were extremely pleased with the Department of Justice's $698,200 commitment in Budget 2008 to have six new Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) officers and a civilian position in Labrador. During previous meetings, the Nunatsiavut Government had indicated this was a priority item. Ministers Kennedy and Pottle also visited Jens Haven Memorial School to meet with students and teachers as well as visited the Nain RCMP detachment.

In Rigolet, both ministers toured Northern Lights Academy and met with members of the school council. They also visited the RCMP detachment and attended the 15th Annual Labrador Inuit Youth Symposium organized by Nunatsiavut Government's Department of Culture, Recreation and Tourism.

"I was pleased to see so many young people from the north coast gathered in Rigolet to discuss issues of importance for them and their communities of Labrador," said Minister Pottle. "It was my pleasure to welcome everyone to Rigolet and wish them much success with their symposium. The Williams Government has demonstrated its strong commitment to the youth of Labrador and it is critically important that our young people show leadership in their communities."

Budget 2008, through year two of the Northern Strategic Plan for Labrador, has allocated more than $6.62 million for new initiatives in Labrador, including an increase of $200,000 to the Air Foodlift Subsidy for a total annual investment of $600,000; $200,000 for the enhancement of the winter trails on the north coast; $60,000 to establish an Aboriginal Literacy Development consultant; and $32,800 for analytical support to assist in the analysis and implementation of recommendations arising from the 2007 National Aboriginal Women's Summit.

Ministers Kennedy and Pottle also met with the Rigolet Partnerships Against Family Violence. "As members of the Ministers Committee on Violence Prevention both Minister Kennedy and I are acutely aware of the needs of women's groups within Newfoundland and Labrador," said Minister Pottle. "We look forward to broadening the discussions of last week and working with the Rigolet Partnerships Against Family Violence in addressing issues of concern for women of the community."

- 30 -

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